Judaism, environmentalism and the environment: Mapping and analysis
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Citation for published version (APA):

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Glossary

Aggadah – classical rabbinical texts which are non-legal in character
Asherah – a sacred tree (pole) dedicated to idolatry
Ashkenazi – the culture and liturgical rites of Jews who originated mainly in Germany and Eastern Europe
Bal tashhit – the Biblical commandment forbidding wanton destruction
Baraita – text originating in the Mishnah period, but not included in the Mishnah
Bar’at – a prayer in the Jewish morning and evening services
Bar Mitzvah – the Jewish legal maturity of a boy at the age of 13
Bavli – the Babylonian Talmud, the edited discussions by the Babylonian sages on the Mishnah (from about 220–500)
Beit haMidrash – house of learning
Conservative Judaism – mid-19th century movement in Europe and USA, maintaining Hebrew as the liturgical language, kashrut, and Shabbat observance, but reluctantly accepting some other modern changes
Dat haAvoda – the religion of labor
Derekh Eretz – decency and decorum
Gemara – part of the Talmud; text which interprets the Mishnah
Halakha – the corpus of Jewish laws which regulate the life of the observant Jew
Halakhot – Jewish laws
Hamez – leavened bread, forbidden during the festival of Pesach
Hasidism – a movement founded in Poland around 1730 by Israel Ba’al Shem-Tov. Its adherents (hasidim) focused on discovering the true service of God through religious enthusiasm.
Havurah – community
Heder – Jewish elementary school
Hora’at Sha’ab – the temporary suspension of the Jewish law for emergency purposes
Hoshana Rabbah – the last day of the Sukkot festival
Hukkim – a category of God-given law which was unlikely to have been developed by the community for rational reasons
Kabbalah – Jewish mysticism
Kabbalist – a person who believes in and studies the Kabbalah
Kashrut – Jewish dietary laws
**Kav** – a measure equal to 24 eggs

**Kavod haBeriyot** – respect for the dead

**Kibbutz** – a collective settlement in Israel

**Kiddush** – ritual blessing over wine on Shabbat and holidays

**Kilayim** – the forbidden mixing of certain species

**Korban** – sacrifice

**Manna** – a non-meat food, provided by God in the Israelites’ 40 years of wandering in the desert

**Midrash** – a method of rabbinic explanation of Bible texts, also used for a collection of such interpretations

**Minhagim** – religious customs

**Mishnah** – the collection of oral teachings, edited by R. Yehuda the Prince, around the year 200

**Mishne Torah** (the repetition of the Torah) – codex summarizing the entire Jewish Law up to the 12th century, by Maimonides

**Mishpatim** – a category of God-given law which, for its benefit, civil society would have instituted on a rational basis even if they were not of Divine origin

**Mitnaggedim** – ‘opponents’; a movement which opposes Hasidism

**Mitzvah (mitzvot)** – religious commandment(s)

**Nazirite** – a person who vows to consecrate himself to God for a certain period of time

**Noachide laws** – laws in the Torah valid for all humanity. These prohibit idolatry, the vain use of God’s name, murder, sexual transgressions, theft and eating the flesh of live animals

**Pesach** – the holiday of ‘Passover’, celebrating the Israelites’ exodus from slavery in Egypt

**Peshat** – the plain meaning of a text

**Pikku’ah Nefesh** (literally: watching one’s soul) – the rule that one should transgress the observance of Halakhot rather than die (the only exceptions to this being murder, incest and idolatry)

**Pirkei Avot** – a tractate from the Mishnah which contains ethical teachings

**Reconstructionism** – a Jewish religious movement, mainly active in the United States, where it was founded by Mordecai M. Kaplan in 1922. It sees the survival of the Jewish people as a central value, rather than religious beliefs or rituals. As far as the latter is concerned, each individual should consider which ones he wishes to practice. It does not believe that the Torah is Divine revelation to Moses.

**Reform Judaism** – also known as ‘Liberal’ or ‘Progressive’ Judaism; originated in Germany in the 19th century; varies from place to place, but the communities share the assertion of the legitimacy
of change in Judaism, and the denial of eternal validity to any
given formulation of Jewish belief or codification of Jewish law

**Responsum (Responsa)** – Jews who required halakhic decisions re-
ferred their questions to Jewish scholars. Their answers, known
as the Responsa literature, extend Jewish law further

**Rosh haShanah** – the Jewish New Year, which occurs in the autumn

**Sefer haHinukh** – an explanation of the Biblical commandments, written by Rabbi Aaron Halevi of Barcelona around 1300

**Sephardi** – the culture and liturgical rites of Eastern or Oriental
Jews

**Shabbat** – the seventh day of the week; the Sabbath

**Shehitah** – Jewish ritual slaughter

**Shema** – central prayer of both the morning and evening services

**Shemittah** – the commandment to let the fields rest for a year, and
not to use any products that they may produce during that time

**Shilhu'ah haKen** – the commandment to send away a mother bird
who is sitting on fledglings or eggs, before taking them

**Shomrei Adamah** (literally: Guards of the Earth) – a Jewish environ-
mental group in the United States

**Shulhan Arukh** (the set table) – codex of Halakha compiled by
Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century) in Palestine

**Sifrei** – one of the oldest collections of rabbinical traditions

**Sukkah** – a hut in which one lives or eats temporarily during the
festival of Sukkot

**Sukkot** – the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles which falls in September
or October

**Takkana (takkanot)** (literally: enactment) – decisions taken by rab-
binical authorities in the public interest

**Talmud** – a book which contains the oral law in writing, and the
rabbinic discussion of its interpretation. It consists of Mishnab
and Gemara. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Baby-
lonian (Bavli) and the Jerusalemite (Yerushalmi) or Palestinian

**Tashlikh** – a ceremony taking place on the afternoon of the first day
of Rosh haShanah in which one’s sins are symbolically cast into
a body of running water

**Torah** – the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses

**Tu bi-Shevat** – a one-day minor festival, the new year of the trees,
usually falling in January or February

**Yishuv ha-aretz, Yishuv ha-Olam** – settling the land or earth

**Yom Kippur** – the Day of Atonement, a solemn day of prayer and
fasting, which falls in September or October

**Yom tov** – a festival or holy day

**Yovel** – jubilee, every 50th year
Za’'ar Ba’alei Hayyim – the commandment to avoid unnecessary suffering to animals
Zaddik – a righteous person; in the Hasidic movement the zaddik is a spiritual and moral leader
Zohar – the Book of Splendor; the central work of Jewish mysticism, usually attributed to the sage Shimon bar Yochai but supposed to have been written by Moses de Leon in Spain at the end of the 13th century